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ABSTRACT

The first of a series of 10 study units for a Migrant Educators' National Training OutReach (MENTOR) correspondence course introduces the characteristics of migrant education, and problems and educational needs of American migrant children. Designed to be used in preservice or inservice teacher education, the unit discusses teacher attitudes and self-awareness of prejudice, migrant student strengths, and the importance of recognizing migrant students' talents and abilities. The unit describes migrant heritage and two common characteristics--migrancy and economic difficulties--while stressing the economic, cultural, ethnic, and attitudinal diversity among migrant workers. The unit reviews services available to migrants, limitations of those services such as community conservatism, prejudice, language barriers, and cultural factors. Excerpts from books, reports, and interviews illustrate educational conditions facing migrant children, emphasize the importance of community resources in teaching migrant educators about the cultures they serve, and discuss sociological factors which anthropologists have labeled the cultures of poverty, machismo, and silence. Addresses of state offices of migrant education and a 30-item bibliography are included. (LFL)

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BOOK 1

HARVESTING the HARVESTERS

AMERICAN NOMADS
Notes on the Nature and Needs of America's Migrant Children

October 1986

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Given the right environment, migrant children can perform on a par with anyone else. It is the system that is failing our children. Begin with the premise that migrant children can succeed academically if their differences are understood and subsequently turned into strengths.

Dr. Michael Reed, Linguistic Advisor
Pennsylvania Migrant Education Program

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Welcome To Migrant Education

A Special Commitment

Migrant workers have been with us since the emergence of modern agricultural methods but Migrant Education as a specialized field is only about twenty years old. During the two decades since the enabling legislation, Migrant Education has come of age as a field. We have learned a great deal about ways to work effectively with migrant families. As a Migrant Educator, you will be joining what is in many ways an elite cadre of teachers and administrators who realize mere competence is not enough.

Migrant Educators must provide an extra measure of dedication. They must be more than usually patient, more than usually tolerant of cultural diversity. They must add idealism, energy, imagination and adaptability to their mastery of content and methodology. They must be advocates as well as instructors. If you have the kind of commitment it takes to meet one of the most difficult challenges in American education, you will be a very welcome addition to the family of Migrant Educators.

Accentuate The Positive

"Begin with the premise that migrant children can succeed academically." The words of Dr. Michael Reed are on the cover of Book One because they express the most important consensus among Migrant Educators, that migrant children have the same native ability as any children from any group. As Gloria Mattera puts it, "When educators really began to examine this, they learned that the problem wasn't with the children at all. The problem was with the teachers." Low expectations can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Perception may become reality as perceived "disadvantages" become excuses for mutual failure—teachers may not know how to communicate with migrants, may not expect much of them; migrant children may accept this, may not expect much of themselves, may not perform well academically and thereby reinforce the negative preception in a vicious circle. Migrant Educators know how to break that circle. They began by appreciating the common humanity of all children, their phenomenal ability to learn,

their insatiable curiousity, their astonishing creativity, their fascinating singularity.

Without minimizing the formidable difficulties most migrant children must overcome, we can begin by recognizing their strengths. Gloria Mattera emphasizes Four Rs: Resilient, Resourceful, Responsible, Responsive. (Ms. Mattera expands on this theme in "Developing a Program of Action to Promote Program and Cultural Awareness," Christina Visperas, ed., one of a series of excellent Curriculum/Training Modules developed in Georgia. Check them out. They exemplify the fine work being done by Migrant Educators in every part of the nation.)

Many of the migrants are bilingual, a great asset if we can recognize it as such and build upon it. Their travels are potentially educational, if we can help them sharpen and trust their powers of observation, if we can help them broaden their horizons to look beyond their immediate surroundings, something every child must learn. Their knowledge of nature and growing things exceeds that of most urban and suburban students. When you work with migrant youngsters, you must seek strengths as skillfully as you diagnose weaknesses. This course of study necessarily stresses specific problems common among this target population, to help you cope with them. Our schools have been failing to provide these students with the educations they need and deserve. There are no simple solutions, no quick fixes. The crucial thing is not to blame the victim. These migrant kids have plenty of talent, plenty of ability. They can achieve. You must know that the same way, with the same assurance, that you know the sun rises in the east.

You go from state to state and you don't get anywhere.

Jusie Luera,
migrant worker

American Nomads

America's migrant workforce might be likened to a nomadic tribe. Its nature is to be hard-working, poor, rootless, alienated, and vulnerable. Its needs include money, stability, self-respect, political clout, health care, housing, hopes for the future, and good education for its children.

The Thousand Cuts

The children of the nation's migrant workers present American education with a daunting challenge. These children have a combination of problems we could summarize as poverty, mobility, and cultural alienation. They are among the poorest people in this largely affluent land, so poor that they too often have inadequate diets and related health problems that affect their ability to perform in school. Their frequent moves from school to school disrupt the essential continuity of the learning process. Many of the migrants

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come from groups that feel culturally alienated from the white middle class mainstream of American schools. Black migrant children must cope with ingrained racism in the larger society, and many Hispanics must overcome a language barrier.

Each of these problems exists elsewhere. There is cruel poverty in urban slums and in many rural backwaters. The children of military personnel and some professionals find their educations disrupted by frequent transfers from school to school. Generations of immigrants have had to deal with cultural alienation and the need to master English. Migrant children must deal with so many difficulties, though, that they suffer from the educational equivalent of the famous torture called The Thousand Cuts. No single wound was mortal, but the accumulation of tiny slashes proved fatal in the end.

Migrant educators must help to heal any wounds the children bring to school, and must work to make sure the school inflicts no new cuts in the form of slights, humiliations, and repeated failures that sap self-esteem until learning becomes virtually impossible.

People think migrants are dirty. If you would go into a store, they would turn up their noses, like you were trash.

Blanche Sharp,
former migrant worker

The Bad News

The bad news is that American schools have been failing to provide most migrant children with the education they need to realize their full potential as human beings or to escape from the cycle of poverty. The dropout rate among migrants is a matter of controversy except on one point: it is high enough to be considered a national tragedy, if not a national disgrace. The United States cannot afford to squander the ability and energy that migrant children bring into the world with them at birth.

The Carneigie Task Force on Education and the Future of the American Economy noted in 1986 that the nation must begin to educate all of our young people so they can perform at their full potential if we are to have a viable economy. More important, we cannot create a permanent underclass and live up to our democratic values. Migrant Educators can play a key role in improving America's mixed record in this regard. American schools have helped millions of impoverished children move into the economic mainstream over many generations, but as a society we have been too complacent on that score, too willing to rest on laurels won in the age of Horace Mann and John Dewey. Despite the fine things done for many individual migrants by many worthwhile programs, we must concede that the majority of migrants still fail to finish high school. We must do better. You can help.

Primum Non Nocere

Medical students begin with an ancient maxim, *Primum non nocere*. It means, "First, do no harm." At worst, our schools convert bright, curious migrant children into discouraged underachievers. Too often migrants feel unwelcome in the very schools they need so much. You must make them welcome, must make them know the classroom is theirs by right. You must make them know their cultural heritage is legitimate, is respected as a valid part of their experience, their identity. To do less is to harm them in the name of helping. *Primum non nocere*. Before you can help migrant children, you must refrain from harming them. They cannot believe in themselves if schools undermine, by design or by inadvertence, their identities and their self-esteem.

The Good News

Migrant education is a field that has come of age professionally. It is over half a century since the plight of migrants came to the nation's attention during the Depression and almost a quarter of a century since the enabling legislation was passed to establish educational programs for migrants during the 1960s. We have learned a great deal, sharing in an impressive body of books, articles, and documentaries.

It is difficult to measure the success of any educational program, if only because so many of the most valuable things we learn defy quantification. Migrant Education is particularly difficult to evalutate because of the constant influx of new people into the migrant streams. Our successes disappear into someone else's statistics while the new migrants have the same old needs. Despite the difficulties of measuring a phenomenon in constant flux, we know that Migrant Education programs can succeed. They demand an extra measure of commitment and idealism from Migrant Educators, a willingness to adjust old habits and try new approaches. Whether the United States as a society has the will to commit the necessary resources to the problem remains an open question, but Migrant Educators believe that we know how to help these young people earn their fair share of the American dream.

No Easy Answers

Migrant Educators have achieved something very like a consensus on many important matters. They favor bilingual/bicultural techniques, individualized teaching, small group activities and peer tutoring, games, an atmosphere that stresses cooperation rather than cut-throat competition, respect for cultural diversity, and attention to the development of self-esteem and a positive self-image. On the whole, they are very suspicious of standardized tests in particular and the mania for testing in general. Virtually everyone emphasizes the need for mutual respect, for involvement of migrant families in the life of school and community, and for early intervention. An emerging awareness stresses that migrant children must be given dreams and skills in the earliest years of their lives, that they are often too discouraged by the time they reach middle school for remedial programs to be fully effective in high school. Absolutely everyone agrees on the importance of networking, of reaching out to every individual and agency capable of helping.

Beyond these general principles, expect no panaceas, no pat slogans. Some key issues defy consensus because they seem to confront American society with a paradox, such as whether to emphasize "excellence" and "standards" to create an elite of high-tech specialists to enable the nation to compete with the Russians, the Japanese, the Germans and so on, or whether to emphasize the more democratic goal of having each individual achieve as much as he or she can.

The Carnegie Task Force and others consider this a false dichotomy; they say we must do both to do either, that we cannot have excellence on a broad

front unless we tap the talent of the poor. At present, though, there is no evidence that the political will exists to allocate adequate resources to the schools to cope with the crisis we all know is upon us.

There is no consensus about the value of vocational education, which is popular among politicians who see it as practical and utilitarian but which critics claim is sometimes misguided, too often training people for trades which do not offer real prospects for employment while ignoring the academic skills vital to survival in the marketplace. We need to explore new ways to involve migrant youth with the realities of the workplace they must enter.

Outside the Migrant Education community, bilingualism is a passionate political controversy. Since the goal of Migrant Ed is to see our students successfully absorbed into the mainstream of American life, we must develop strong ties with every aspect of school and community activities. American education mirrors American society, with its constant tension among competing aspirations. If Migrant Educators are convinced of the superiority of bilingual teaching techniques, they must convince their colleagues and their neighbors of the reasons for that conviction.

We do not have all the answers. If we had them, we do not have the resources to translate them into effective programs. However, in this imperfect world, we can take heart from what has been accomplished and from the certain knowledge that we will not retreat from our commitment to provide every child in the United States with the best possible education.

The National Debt To Migrant Workers

Migrancy is a continental phenomenon embracing people of many kinds. Migrant workers perform absolutely essential functions in the American economy, doing very hard work that ought to earn them a decent living. Programs for migrants must be considered partial, belated payment of a great debt. Far from being charity, they are its opposite.

Americans pay a smaller percentage of their income for food than the citizens of any other industrialized nation. This is a tribute to our entire system of agriculture and a testimony to nature's bounty in our part of the globe, but it is partially due to policies which depend upon cheap labor to harvest crops. To some extent, everyone in America who eats benefits from the work of migrant laborers. In the phrase "migrant worker," the word "worker" is at least as important as the word "migrant." In the land that prides itself on being the home of the Puritan Ethic which admires hard work as a virtue in and of itself, migrant workers work as hard or harder than virtually any other group in society. These people are not freeloaders, nor are programs for them in any sense charity.

Programs for migrants are partial payment for the important work they do, for the essential contribution they make to the agricultural sector of the national economy.

It is arguable that no stigma should be attached to any individual or group who accepts any social service, whether daycare or medicare, social security or aid to dependent children. The rich do not apologize for their tax breaks, nor should the poor apologize for taking advantage of their legal rights. However valid that argument may be, there is still a stigma attached to those who find themselves enmeshed in the social safety net. Their children know it, too, and the schools all too often help to teach them about the stigma. No group deserves to be stigmatized less than the migrant workers who harvest the crops that feed us all.

Be honest with yourself about your own attitudes. The United States has a capitalist economy and an emphasis on individualism that can tempt us to blame the poor for their poverty, as if each individual poor person had failed to succeed through his or her own shortcomings. Children from well-to-do families enjoy a huge head start in this economic contest, and many groups suffer disadvantages beyond the scope of individuals to overcome easily. Native Americans, Black Americans, Hispanics, recent immigrants, single parents, and the technologically unemployed are examples of groups with particular problems. Unsurprisingly, many of them find themselves in the migrant workforce, where low wages and benefits combine with seasonal employment and few chances for promotion to trap many in a cycle of deprivation.

Teaching the children of migrants is not quite like teaching in the mainstream. Migrant Educators need the same mastery of content and technique as other teachers plus a willingness to involve themselves in a broad range of activities not customarily associated with classroom teaching. Migrant Educators find themselves networking with other teachers, social workers, public officials, private agencies, and any institution or individual capable of helping the student or the student's family to solve whatever problems interfere with learning. Migrant Educators must develop special sensitivities while learning to be even more ingenious and more patient than all good teachers. One thing Migrant Educators need above all is the conviction that migrant families have **earned** their just portion of the American dream.

Self-Awareness

You must begin by asking yourself the important questions only you can answer. One would be: am I a racist? Of course, if we ask it just that way, we let ourselves off the hook too easily, since few of us would be willing to make sure a repugnant confession. The more difficult question is: do I accept stereotypes that might poison the atmosphere of a classroom?

If you grew up in comfortable or affluent circumstances, do you believe that anyone could get a steady job if he or she really tried hard? Do you believe that too many of the poor accept their lot because they are lazy or shiftless or lack initiative? Do you believe that even the poorest family could afford soap and decent clothing?

If you are Black, do you resent all whites? Do you believe you can understand them but they can't understand you?

If you are white, do you think Blacks are too paranoid about racism? Do you think they are ungrateful for the gains they have made during the past three decades?

If you are a European ethnic, do you resent Hispanics for wanting to keep their ancestral language when your grandparents or great-grandparents were forced to sink-or-swim in English?

If you are Protestant, do you believe that the United States grew rich in the industrial era because the Protestant emphasis on individualism is inherently superior to the Roman Catholic stress on respect for authority?

If you are Jewish, are you suspicious of Germans and Arabs? If you are not Jewish, are you suspicious that Jews can never be really loyal Americans

because of their unswerving dedication to Isreal?

If you are female, do you believe all young males tend to be too aggressive and ought to have their **machismo** reduced? If male, do you believe women tend to be too emotional?

You are, of course, entitled to your opinions. This is, as we are justifiably proud to repeat over and over again, a free country. Most stereotypes contain just enough accuracy to make them dangerous. It probably comes down to something like this: **If you can hate in the plural, you should not work as an educator.**

Cultural values and patterns of behavior emerge as responses to real conditions and real needs, which vary from place to place, from time to time, from group to group. Schools in our pluralistic society must respect the rich cultural diversity which ought to be a source of great pride for all Americans.

You must be ruthlessly honest with yourself. You need not be an overt bigot to harbor attitudes which can have a damaging effect upon migrant children, who too often sense that they are unwanted. You must respect them as they are. This may not be as easily done as said. The poor tend to be anti-authoritarian and anti-intellectual, for example, traits they share with other Americans in slightly exaggerated form. The anti-authoritarianism is a legitimate response to their lives, yet as an authority figure you may be ambivalent about their suspicion of you as a symbol or even an agent of the forces that exploit them. Their anti-intellectualism must be understood even as you combat it; you must respect the reality that produces anti-intellectualism while working to eliminate it because it can blight a life if it inhibits the development of the mind and the spirit. More than most teachers, Migrant Educators must balance their own values against the competing yet also legitimate values of a culturally diverse student body. If that balance cannot be achieved in the classroom, it cannot be achieved in the society, and the American dream will remain unfulfilled. American education must translate the American dream into reality.

Our Common Heritage of Migrancy

Sometimes we tend to ignore the obvious because it seems too, well, too obvious. Everyone working with migrant children must remember that while their situations may be difficult, there is little that is alien or exotic in the experience of migration *per se*. Beyond the common humanity we share with everyone on the planet, all of us in the Americas share a heritage of migration. The Native Americans migrated from Asia aeons ago, with many tribes leading a nomadic existence following the great herds of bison. The Europeans who came continued to migrate, penetrating the wilderness and spilling across the continent. The Africans, once freed from bondage, migrated to all the major cities in every part of the nation. The average American family moves once every five years. We have been and remain a peripatetic people, curious, restless, ready to move on in the hope of a better life. When traditional heavy industries in the northeast and midwest fell upon hard times in recent years, the President suggested that people vote with their feet by migrating to the Sun Belt. Few of us live where our great-grandparents lived. To some extent, we expect ourselves to move. Bright young people are urged to leave their hometowns to pursue careers; any who do not, who remain in their neighborhoods or villages, are viewed with a sort of suspicion, as if they lacked get-up-and-go. We are proud to be a nation on wheels, proud of our horizontal as well as of our vertical mobility. People who retire with adequate means relocate to Florida or Arizona or join caravans of seniors living on wheels.

Plainly the plight of migrant workers is something distinct from the enviable mobility of young professionals or retired executives. The one group is scorned and pitied because it has too little money while the other groups are admired because they are prosperous. Scott Fitzgerald told Ernest Hemingway that the rich are different from the poor; Hemingway replied yes, they are different—they have more money. George Orwell thought we would admire panhandlers if they got rich doing it. Many of us dote on the lives of rich celebrities of little talent whose contribution to the national well-being is less important than that of the workers who harvest our crops. Schools mimic the larger society, which in its materialism sometimes seems to admire wealth however attained and to disdain poverty however hardworking and decent the poor may be.

The problems confronting migrant families are not simply a function of their nomadic lifestyle. Americans define themselves as people on the move. Much of our most popular literature, from *Moby-Dick* and *Huckleberry Finn* to *On The Road* and *Star Trek*, tells us about voyages. We will focus on the singular problems faced by the children of migrant workers, problems compounded by rootlessness, poverty, alienation, inability to communicate, low self-esteem, thwarted lives, throttled dreams. These problems are real, but they are not necessarily insurmountable if we have the will to face them squarely and the heart to devote adequate resources to them. One way to begin is by remembering that all Americans are migrants and the children and grandchildren of migrants. Ours is a common heritage.

He who would do good to another must do it in minute particulars: General good is the plea of the scoundrel, hypocrite, and flatterer. For art and science cannot exist but in minutely organized particulars.

William Blake

Generalizing About Migrancy

A favorite teacher's paradox goes like this: "All generalizations are false, especially this one." We must generalize from particulars, of course, if we are to make sense of life, yet the complexity of issues makes every generalization suspect. Migrancy is a continental phenomenon, international in scope, multidimensional in shape. Generalizations about migrancy, even those you encounter in this course, in this book, in this paragraph, must be tested against your specific situaiton. Migrancy in Alabama differs from migrancy in Alaska, and so on. The experts whose contributions comprise this course of study formed their opinions after years of study, experience, and reflection, so the notions you encounter will be informed and reliable. Still, you deserve to be warned at the beginning that this course is only a cursory survey of a vast and complicated subject. Consider a basic question: Who are these migrants?

In a narrow sense, they can be legally defined as those who move from place to place to work in agriculture or fisheries whether interstate in the

Eastern, Central, or Western streams, or intrastate (non-stream). Yes, you say, but **who** are they, what are they like? That can be very difficult to say with any precision.

Many migrant families blend steady jobs with seasonal picking to earn decent livings. They take pride in their skills, enjoy their lifestyle, and would resent anything that patronized them. Other migrant families are not so fortunate, having been caught in a cycle of seasonal work and chronic poverty; while they too would resent being patronized, most reluctantly admit they need help. Some migrant workers are young people who until recently held good jobs in factories and offices but who cannot find other work; they expect to rejoin the mainstream of the workforce soon. A few are street people and derelicts, often alcoholics or schizophrenics, who are rounded up by recruiters desperate to find hands to harvest crops that refuse to wait. If this paragraph seems to you to describe a cross-section of working class America, so be it. In the Western Stream, most migrants are Hispanic; in the Central Stream, many are Black; in the Eastern Stream, many are from Puerto Rico, Haiti, or other islands; virtually every ethnic group is represented in the migrant population, with Blacks and Hispanics statistically overrepresented, making sensitivity to the special needs of these groups an essential element in Migrant Education.

Beyond their migrancy and the economic difficulties associated with low pay and seasonal employ, migrants may have little in common. Some belong to traditional cultures that sustain their identities while others may suffer from anomie, the sense of spiritual isolation that afflicts those whose cultural identities have fragmented under the onslaught of poverty and dislocation and rapid social change. An Inuit fishing in Alaska, a white dairy worker in upstate New York, a Mississippi Black picking cotton, a Chicano harvesting apples in Oregon, a Haitian working with produce in New Jersey, these individuals may be as distinct from one another as you are from any of them. Always remember that the individual migrant in front of you is just that, an individual.

One generalization about migrancy is terribly valid: when migrant children move frequently from school to school, their education suffers. Even well-to-do children can suffer from too-frequent transfers that disrupt patterns of learning. Children who move frequently and also suffer from the effects of poverty suffer far more. When these problems are compounded by difficulties in communications due to cultural barriers or learning disabilities, the effects can be devastating.

Some Statistics, Complete With Caveat

Now that we have warned you to be suspicious of generalizations, we will complicate things further by warning you to be suspicious of specifics, too. In the United States, we have accurate statistics about nearly everything, but not about migrancy. We do not know how many people are in the migrant streams at any given time, and estimates vary according to the political convictions of those making them. Migrants are difficult to count because they are on the move, because they are often in remote rural venues, because they are often reluctant to be counted for many good reasons, and because sometimes the counters do not want to count them.

Most migrants are American citizens, but illegal aliens among them hide from census-takers of every sort.

Some local governments do not wish to be bothered with programs for migrants, even those mandated by law, so they manage to underestimate their numbers.

Some school districts do not want migrant children lowering either the middle class tone or the test scores of their schools, so they do not enforce truancy laws as vigorously as they might.

Some farmers refuse to cooperate with authorities because they want to save money by providing substandard facilities or wages.

Consider a migrant family with no cash and four children: a boy of 14, a girl of 8, and twin girls of 4. The mother and father may need the earnings of the boy of 14, and they may need to have the girl of 8 take care of the twins so the mother can work in the field. In that case, the older children may never attend school when work is available. In a worst case scenario, the school district and the farmer and the local government may all conspire with the family, each for its own perceived self-interest, to ignore the truancy, even to ignore the presence of the migrants in the community as much as possible.

The cummulative effect of such situations is that accurate statistics about migrancy are hard to come by. Many migrants are never counted, are never served by programs designed to help them. If you are interested in statistical data, here are a few sources and some numbers.

National Council of LaRaza, *The Education of Hispanics: Selected Statistics*, July 1985.

National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, *The Condition of Education, 1984.* (U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.)

U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Money Income of Households, Families, and Persons in the United States*, Current Population Reports, Series p. 60. No. 139. (U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.

Where Have All the Farmworkers Gone? (The Statistical Annihilation of Hired Farmworkers.) An Analysis of the Federal Effort to Define and Count Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers. Research Report No. 1, ERIC AN ED172988.

> *People want out, but they don't see any options. They think, 'This is all I can do.*
>
> Lourdes Villanueva,
> migrant worker

Some Numbers To Conjur With

TOTAL NUMBER OF MIGRANT FARM WORKERS

Two Million *(Wall Street Journal,* June 26, 1986)

NUMBER OF MIGRANT CHILDREN IN PROGRAMS

Calendar Year	Full-time Equivalent Students (ages 5-17)	Number of Eligible Students (Under 21 Years of Age)
1977	296,430	467,796
1978	323,501	494,417
1979	366,460	522,154
1980	398,798	550,253
1981	417,298	577,483
1982	426,729	593,042
1983	407,650	566,714
1985	441,375	530,064

ROUGH ESTIMATE OF MIGRANT CHILDREN NOT SERVED

Not all migrant children in schools are in special programs. Rosemarie Middleton, a Migrant Educator at the Ruskin Elementary School in Florida, estimates that a third of the parents never enroll their children. No matter how you look at it, an enormous number of migrant children are not getting the help they need and deserve under the law.

AVERAGE MIGRANT FAMILY INCOME

The *Wall Street Journal* on June 26, 1986, estimated it at about $7,000.00 a year, far below the poverty level. (The Bureau of Labor Statistics puts the poverty level for a family of 4 at $9,800 and for a family of 7—a more usual number for migrants—at $13,000.)

Migrants have trouble receiving public assistance because they must reapply at every new place and wait for eligibility. The constant influx of unskilled workers from Latin America keeps wages low. The last raise for tomato pickers around Ruskin, Florida, was in 1981 when the price for a bucket went from 35¢ to 40¢, but growers eliminated that by introducing a larger bucket.

MIGRANT HEALTH

The average life expectancy of a migrant worker is 49, compared to a national average of 73.

Migrant infant mortality is 25% higher than the national average. Migrant death rates from tuberculosis and other communicable diseases are 25% above national averages; for influenza and pneumonia, 20% higher. Birth defects are similarly higher.

Hospitalization rate from accidents is 50% higher. Unsanitary living conditions make migrant health a national scandal. Despite half a century of public awareness of the disgraceful conditions and a quarter century of enlightened legislation on the books, conditions remain as bad as ever. Again from the *Wall Street Journal* in 1986: *Cases of peonage, where workers are enslaved by crew chiefs, still exist, according to the Department of Labor. Child labor remains common. Housing is short, and trailer landlords charge tenants by the head—up to $35 each week. Some families still live in trucks or in the groves.*

> *How utterly, perhaps unspeakably, devastating a migrant life can be for children.*
>
> Robert Coles

Harvesting The Harvesters

The spirit animating this course of study is, on the whole, upbeat. Thousands of migrants have worked their ways toward the top of the business and professional worlds, living proof that the American dream of a better life for the disadvantaged can still come true. You will be joining a group of educators, healers, social workers, and citizen volunteers working to ameliorate conditions for migrant workers and their families. There is no excuse for despair, no useful purpose served by being discouraged before you begin. That said, it is essential to face facts. At their worst, the conditions facing migrant children are destructive not merely to self-esteem and learning potential but to the personality itself. Harvard psychologist Robert Coles spent years working with migrant chil-

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dren. Here is his personal assessment from his important book *Uprooted Children: The Early Life of Migrant Farm Workers:*

Somehow, then, we come to terms with them, who are, to take an expression literally and apply it very soberly, the wretched of the American earth. We do so each in his or her own way. We ignore them. We shun them. We claim ignorance of them. We declare ourselves helpless before their problems. We say they deserve what they get, or don't deserve better, or do deserve better if only they would go demand it. We say things are complicated, hard to change, stubbornly unyielding. We say progress is coming, has even come, will come in the future. We say (in a pinch) that yes, it is awful—but so have others found life: awful, mean, harsh, cruel, and a lot of other words. Finally, we say yes, it is awful—but so awful that those who live under such circumstances are redeemed, not later in Heaven, as many of them believe but right here on this earth, where they become by virtue of extreme hardship and suffering a kind of elect: hard and tough and shrewd and canny and undeluded and undeceived and open and honest and decent and self-sacrificing and hauntingly, accusingly hard-working. I have at times, many times, done that, extolled these children and their brothers grandparents and aunts and uncles; I have extolled them all almost to heaven, where I suppose I also believe they will eventually and at last get their reward and where, by the way, they will be out of my way, out of my mind—which balks at saying what it nevertheless knows must be said about how utterly, perhaps unspeakably, devastating a migrant life can be for children.

With such great obstacles to overcome, migrant children may make greater demands upon their teachers than children from more stable situations. As a Migrant Educator, you may be the child's primary, somtimes only link to the mainstream of American society. You may find yourself functioning as counselor or advocate. Since you are not a robot, you will find yourself emotionally involved in the lives of migrant families. Some teachers may feel they have the right to remain aloof from the private lives of their students, but while Migrant Educators must respect the privacy of those who want it, they must also be willing to become involved in the lives of the migrant families they serve.

Holes in the Safety Net

You may discover that even when programs exist to aid the underprivileged, it is no easy matter for migrants to take advantage of them. This is an excerpt from the final report of a field study of child welfare services for migrant children conducted about ten years ago:

ANALYSIS OF PARAMETERS AFFECTING SERVICES TO MIGRANTS

A number of factors hinder migrants in obtaining social services as readily as the rest of the population. These factors concern the nature of the communities in which migrants typically are found, the high degree of mobility of the migrants themselves, and the nature of the agencies through which services are to be obtained.

NATURE OF THE COMMUNITY

The communities to which farmworkers migrate are rural, small, and supported primarily by agriculture. Such communities are traditionally conservative with regard to government expenditures in general and social programs in particular, and further tend to be relatively more racially and ethnically homogeneous than larger population centers that have a greater occupational mix and a more diverse economy. In all but two of the states surveyed, the county government plays a role in planning for and administering local social services. As a result, elected officials represent the view held by the community, and program planners must provide services that are in accordance with local, state, and federal social services objectives.

Due to the dominant role of agriculture in the local economies, the owners of agricultural enterprises tend to be well-represented in the local government and political leadership. The use of migratory labor is typically well known as are the amount of their wages, the typical housing used by migrants, and their cultural and language distinctions. Agency involvement in comprehensive social services to migrants, including regular outreach visits to the camps (which are usually on a grower's property), may be considered interference with a grower's affairs. If a grower is generally opposed to government social programs, he may find convenient, informal ways through the local decision-making process to minimize such services, such as pointing out the duty of the agency to focus on unmet needs among the year-round, resident population.

The migrant camp setting itself impedes service delivery. Migrants frequently travel in crews, arriving in an area by prior arrangement just at the time their services are needed and leaving shortly thereafter, spending all their time either in the camp or in the fields. Not all members of such a group may have ready access to transportation. Some crew leaders control the activities of their employees by using permission to visit a social service agency as a reward, and denying such permission as a punishment or reprimand. Growers themselves may strictly prohibit access to their lands and/or their migrant camps by social program representatives. Finally, migrants in the area for only a short time usually do not know of agencies and programs to which they could turn for assistance.

CHARACTERISTICS OF MIGRANTS

The nature of the migrant population itself creates obstacles to service. Almost two-thirds of the migrants in this country are of Hispanic origin, including Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, and legally or illegally entered Mexicans. Of these, a large portion have only a minimal knowledge of the English language. Negotiation of agency intake and application procedures are formidable tasks when they must be carried out between an agent and a migrant who share neither language nor culture. Private social service organizations, such as those operating federally-sponsored migrant manpower and health programs, provide bilingual staff members to assist the applicant if possible, and there is a small but growing number of public agencies which recognize and meet the need for interpreters. If local farmworker organizations do not provide language assistance, and if the local agency's non-migrant clientele is almost exclusively English-speaking, the agency's services are effectively unavailable to migrants of limited English-speaking ability.

Cultural factors, which are intertwined with linguistic differences from the host community, affect both the types of services that could be provided and

the migrant's ability to obtain them. In the Hispanic migrant population, which for the most part consists of families traveling together, a strong sense of family self-sufficiency and responsibility predominates. As a result, situations requiring alterations of the structure of the household or temporary removal of some of its members tend to be resolved internally, using the family's own resources rather than seeking or permitting outside aid. Several agency respondents indicated that attempts at intervention (which, in many states, require police as well as social services action) by social services agency representatives characteristically would be cause for a family to migrate onward, prior to their planned time of departure; in one case an entire crew left, leaving the grower without workers, when it was discovered that a nocturnal police visit was brought about by an inaccurate report of child abuse.

Migrant families, unlike other needy families, are away from their permanent homes and lead more tenuous lives. A car accident can leave a family stranded in a strange state with no money left after repairs, if there is enough money for repairs in the first place. Changes in weather or the discovery that there is no housing at a work site, necessitating sleeping out-of-doors or in a car, may create greater risks of exposure than anticipated. The family may simply have to spend their last money on food and have none for gasoline to enable them to drive to a place where they know there will be work. Social service agencies are in general not prepared to deal with such situations other than through what may be inapplicable programs—a family without blankets cannot be helped with food stamps. Private groups, such as farmworkers organizations or church-related volunteer service organizations, are generally the only resources available to address these needs, but typically can provide only limited assitance.

Little has changed in the past ten years to make services more accessible. With the best will in the world, bureaucratic structures are inflexible, and migrants do not always encounter the best will in the world. As a Migrant Educator, recognizing that the total environment of the migrant child affects learning potential, you must take the broadest possible view of yourself as a member of a team that includes every agency and every individual who might be helpful to that child, and you must be willing to accept responsibility and take initiative to assure effective teamwork.

Know Thyself!

Plutarch

Common Ground

To teach migrant children, to communicate with them, you must meet on common ground. It is important to know who you are, and to be aware of aspects of your personality, your culture, your demeanor which may affect your ability to establish rapport with migrant children. Competence and compassion are essential, yet despite your mastery of content and technique, despite your empathetic emotions, you may find communication complicated by cultural factors. Culture is at the root of identity, something we take for granted the way we do our height or our age. It is something that others notice at once, even children, just as they note our height and our age. They will note whether we are Black or white, Irish or Italian; they will quickly discern if we were raised in poverty or affluence.

Because migrancy is so various, even a fellow migrant or former migrant cannot be expected to share all the cultural values of other migrants because these vary from group to group. What is essential is that you work to prevent your own cultural identity from establishing barriers to communication with your students.

This is particularly important if you come, as many educators do, from a middle class background. There is nothing wrong with what we call middle class values, but you must not confuse them with universal truths.

It is axiomatic that migrant children need schools more than children from affluent circumstances need them. Despite this compelling need, too many migrant children find school a forbidding place, off-putting, a hostile rather than a welcoming environment. Since the education establishment is not permeated by fiends who deliberately plot ways to make migrant children feel unwelcome, we must assume that something more subtle is going on. Many of the features of school that make migrant children ill-at-ease are unspoken and insidious. Here is the way Frank Riessman puts it in his book *The Culturally Deprived Child:*

Pupils from culturally deprived homes are commonly resented as drawbacks to the morale and achievement of the school class. The fact that these youngsters do not see much value in formal academic routines, and have often been humiliated by failure, breeds in them hostility toward school authorities and, in a vicious cycle, deepens the alienation between teachers and the very pupils who most need their help.

Discrimination is like the Chinese Water Torture—each small slight hurts worse than the one before, until none can be ignored. Here is the way a Black migrant worker from Louisiana put it:

But, in a lot of schools, they don't seem even to want you, your kids. They'll give you and them those sour looks when you come in, and they'll act toward you as if you're dirty—you know what I mean?—as if, well, as if you're just no good, and that's that.

You are not prejudiced against migrants, against Blacks, against Hispanics, against the poor. Are you positive, though, that you would never give a sour look to someone who came into your classroom wearing dirty work clothes and smelling of perspiration and fertilizer? If you visit a migrant camp and find your pupils living in conditions you consider squalid, will your reaction be one of evident disapproval? Know Thyself. The children will be watching you closely. If you seem superior or condescending, aloof or disapproving, they will resent it.

Schools reflect the values of the larger society. They value material success, which may take the form of money for class dues and club fees, fashionable clothes, fad items like Cabbage Patch dolls for younger children, cars and computers for older ones. The kids who have these things may feel right at home in school; the kids who don't have them may feel like losers.

Beyond materialism, schools reward the middle class values of competitiveness, individualism, thrift, delayed gratification, and conventional phrases of humility. (For example, when a middle class student is given an award as Most Valuable Player, he knows it is expected ritual behavior to say something like, "I'll accept this on behalf of the entire team, because I owe everything to my teammates and to the coach, the water boy, the cheerlead-

ers, my mom, the Board of Education, and all our swell fans," whereas a student from an improverished background is more apt to say, "When I play my best like I did today, I could make the pros.")

The poor, whether Black or Hispanic or white or whatever, develop defense mechanisms to cope with their poverty. These legitimate responses to real conditions may seem inappropriate in the middle class classroom. Wit and anger, for example, may be seen as threatening or disruptive in a school even if they are essential to survival in the camps, on the road, or in the street. Migrant Educators must use their imaginations to appreciate what is genuine, authentic, and essential in values and behavior which may be unfamliar to them because of their own comfortable circumstances.

Cultural Pluralism

Love kids, respect people, enjoy your work, and be intelligent and flexible enough to build your program from what you learn from the community you serve.

Herbert Kohl

The format of this book and the general nature of this survey course make it impossble to consider the specific cultural attributes of various ethnic groups prominent in the migrant streams. You must learn from your students and their families what their values are, and you must make an effort to learn about and appreciate their heritage. Recent immigrants from rural Mexico may have less in common with many Mexican-Americans than the Mexican-Americans have in common with Anglos, since studies show increasingly common values among Americans of every ethnic background, and Mexican and Mexican-American alike are distinct culturally from Puerto Ricans even if all are Hispanic. Keep your senses alert, your mind open, and your imagination alive to learn as much as you teach, a symbiosis much to be desired.

We will devote a few words to some general traits that cross ethnics lines and may be unfamiliar to some middle class educators: a Culture of Poverty, a Culture of Machismo, and a Culture of Silence. These complex, controversial concepts are not presented as orthodoxies for you to adopt but, on the contrary, as complex, controversial concepts that you may contemplate as a means of enriching your awareness of your own preconceptions. In the vernacular, one might say "You got to know where you're coming from to know where you're going." If you are, like most teachers, coming from a conventional middle class milieu, Migrant education will give you a fresh perspective on your convictions.

A Culture of Poverty

Worried as they are about day-to-day subsistence, the poor place less value on thrift than the middle class. They tend to take their pleasures when they can, rather than delaying gratification in the interest of some long term plan (waiting to get married, say, after they finish medical school). They may use bravado or wit as weapons to fight through difficult days. They may have to cope with more frustration and more anger than their wealthier counterparts. For a tragic few, violence may lurk nearer the surface than it does with many of us who have been more fortunate. Some may **seem** less verbal, at least within the intimicating confines of the classroom. Patterns of behavior emerge to cope with the stresses of economic deprivation.

Anthropologist Oscar Lewis lived among the poor in Mexico City and among Puerto Ricans in New York to study what he called a Culture of Poverty, a phrase he used to convey the legitimacy of the way the poor lived, given their limited options and terrible deprivations. Here are a few of his ideas so you can do your thinking about the problem of poverty among migrants in the broader context of global poverty, of the ongoing tension among haves and have-nots.

(N.B. The techniques and conclusions of Oscar Lewis were questioned by many conventional anthropologists. His accounts of life among the poor have the power of nonfiction combined with the emotional impact of literature. Lewis reminds us that the poor do what they do as legitimate and usually comprehensible responses to the conditions of their lives.)

As an anthropologist I have tried to understand poverty and its associated traits as a culture or, more accurately, as a subculture and rationale, as a way of life which is passed down from generation to generation along family lines. This view directs attention to the fact that the culture of poverty in modern nations is not only a matter of economic deprivation, of disorganization or of the absence of something. It is also something positive and provides some rewards without which the poor could hardly carry on.

The culture of poverty is both an adaptation and a reaction of the poor to their marginal position in a class stratified, highly individuated, capitalistic society. It represents an effort to cope with feelings of hopelessness and despair which develop from the realization of the improbability of achieving success in terms of the values and goals of the larger society. Indeed, many of the traits of the culture of poverty can be viewed as attempts at local solutions for problems not met by existing institutions and agencies because the people are not eligible for them, cannot afford them, or are ignored by or suspicious of them.

The culture of poverty, however, is not only an adaptation to a set of objective conditions of the larger society. Once it comes into existence it tends to perpetuate itself from generation to generation because of its effect on the children. By the time poor children are age six or seven they have usually absorbed the basic values and attitudes of their subculture and are not psychologically geared to take full advantage of changing conditions or increased opportunities which may occur in their lifetime.

The lack of effective participation and integration of the poor in the major institutions of the larger society is one of the crucial characteristics of the culture of poverty. This is a complex matter and results from a variety of factors which may include lack of economic resources, segregation and discrimination, fear, suspicion or apathy, and the development of local solutions for problems. However, "participation" in some of the institutions of the larger society—for example, in the jails, the army and the public relief system—does not per se eliminate the traits of the culture of poverty. In the case of a relief system which barely keeps people alive, both the basic poverty and the sense of hopelessness are perpetuated rather than eliminated.

People with a culture of poverty produce very little wealth and receive very little in return. They have a low level of literacy and education, usually do

not belong to labor unions, are not members of political parties, generally do not participate in the national welfare agencies, and make very little use of banks, hospitals, department stores, museums or art galleries. They have a critical attitude toward some of the basic institutions of the dominant classes, hatred of the police, mistrust of government and those in high position, and a cynicism which extends even to the church.

People with a culture of poverty are aware of middle-class values, talk about them and even claim some of them as their own, but on the whole they do not live by them. Thus it is important to distinguish between what they say and what they do. Middle-class people, and this would certainly include most social scientists, tend to concentrate on the negative aspects of the culture of poverty. They tend to associate negative valences to such traits as present-time orientation and concrete versus abstract orientation. I do not intend to idealize or romanticize the culture of poverty. As someone has said, "It is easier to praise poverty than to live in it"; yet some of the positive aspects which may flow from these traits must not be overlooked. Living in the present may develop a capacity for spontaneity and adventure, for the enjoyment of the sensual, the indulgence of impulse, which is often blunted in the middle-class, future-oriented man. Perhaps it is this reality of the moment which the existentialist writers are so desperately trying to recapture but which the culture of poverty experiences as natural, everyday phenomena. The frequent use of violence certainly provides a ready outlet for hostility so that people in the culture of poverty suffer less from repression than does the middle class.

In the traditional view, anthropologists have said that culture provides human beings with a design for living, with a ready-made set of solutions for human problems so that individuals don't have to begin all over again each generation. That is, the core of culture is its positive adaptive function. I, too, have called attention to some of the adaptive mechanisms in the culture of poverty—for example, the low aspiration level helps to reduce frustration, the legitimization of short-range hedonism makes possible spontaneity and enjoyment. However, on the whole it seems to me that it is a relatiely thin culture. There is a great deal of pathos, suffering and emptiness among those who live in the culture of poverty. It does not provide much support or long-range satisfaction and its encouragement of mistrust tends to magnify helplessness and isolation. Indeed, the poverty of culture is one of the crucial aspects of the culture of poverty.

A Culture of Machismo

Boys from Culture of Poverty are very apt to resent schools because they consider them dominated by women, womenish men, or feminine values. Here is Oscar Lewis:

Closely related to this physical bias is the emphasis on masculinity. The underprivileged boy's emphasis on masculinity derives, in part, from his patriarchal culture where the father is the "tough boss" of the home, and his authority is backed up by physical force. Even in the Negro sub-culture, the mother frequently plays a strong, masculine type of role, and is prone to stress and utilize physical force.

Talk, reading, and intellectualism in general are viewed as unmasculine—the opposite of action. Moreover, the school is often imaged as a "prissy" place dominated by women and female values.

However enlightened or progressive your own views on feminism or the equality of the sexes, you must appreciate the importance of masculinity to boys from some cultures. John Holt makes a similar point in *What Do I Do Monday?*: "Many people have by now pointed out that the way to get along and get ahead in school, whether you are a boy or a girl, is to act as if you were a girl. It is sadly and dreadfully true. The very things that boys, real boys, the best boys are most proud of, that make them feel most like boys, are exactly the things that are least acknowledged, admired, praised, or rewarded in school. In fact, these qualities are very likely to get them in trouble."

Boys from a culture that values strength, courage, and aggressiveness in males may find schools an alien environment. All teachers, male or female, must recognize the source of tensions that can arise because poor (and not only poor) boys may feel emasculated by the classroom environment.

A Culture of Silence

The schools are key institutions in the transmission of cultural values. While we in the United States think of education as a path toward success, some critics feel that at their worst the schools may represent a paternalistic status quo which thwarts the aspirations of the very poor. Paulo Freire, who was born into a middle class family in Recife, Brazil, in 1921 only to endure great hardships during the Depression years of the Thirties, is such a critic.

His early sharing of the life of the poor also led him to the discovery of what he describes as the "culture of silence" of the dispossessed. He came to realize that their ignorance and lethargy were the direct product of the whole situation of economic, social, and political domination—and of the paternalism—of which they were victims. Rather than being encouraged and equipped to know and respond to the concrete realities of their world, they were kept "submerged" in a situation in which such critical awareness and response were practically impossible. And it became clear to him that the whole educational system was one of the major instruments for the maintenance of this culture of silence.

We in the United States would be reluctant to concede that the schools tend to silence the poor. However, if the children of migrant workers find that the schools are formal, austere, regimented, and middle class, they may feel reluctant to speak frankly about the concerns closest to their hearts. Your task as a teacher of migrants is to be certain that your classroom fosters real communication about their lives in relation to the society around them. Do not expect this to be easy to establish, this genuine communication. Silence is a weapon for the disadvantaged. A silent student does not risk humiliation. A silent student may be considered well-behaved, someone who never disrupts the class. Breaking such a silence is essential before true learning can begin.

The Goal of a Good Education

We spend billions annually on a system of mandatory public education that forces children to spend many years in school. What is the goal of this system? Here is what Thomas Jef-

ferson said a couple of hundred years ago:

I look to the diffusion of light and education as the resources most to be relied on for ameliorating the condition, promoting the virtue, and advancing the happiness of man. And I do hope, in the present spirit of extending to the great mass of mankind the blessings of instruction, I see a prospect of great advancement in the happiness of the human race.

Few Americans would argue with this as a statement of faith in the power of education. In practice, though, a tension develops between the pressure to teach every child every subject and the pressure to maintain standards of excellence for the most accomplished children. Here is one statement of that tension: "With naive faith we expected our system of universal education to deliver us the American millenium. Our schools have given us exactly what we demanded of them. Old standards of scholarship, of discipline in the habit of work, have had to go in order to make education fit in with our democratic ideas and to accomplish the task of making something like a standardized American. We have expanded in scope at the expense of depth, in quantity at the expense of quality." That might have come from one of the recent studies about the state of public education. In fact, it is from *Children of the New Day*, published over half a century ago, in 1934.

Today the terms of the debate tend to feature phrases like "enhanced self-esteem" on the one side and "maintenance of standards" on the other. This is not an issue to be resolved but a paradox to be confronted: If we devote limited resources to producing excellence among the few, can we simultaneously develop the full potential of the many?

Your task, as a teacher of migrants, is to help each child reach his or her full potential. Still, you cannot escape the tension that exists because of the different pressures on the system. While few today are as frank about it as the authors of *Children of the New Day*, there is still pressure on the schools to make "something like a standardized American." This presents the migrant child with a terrible dilemma: to the extent that the child adopts the models of the school—the language, the values, the aspirations—he or she may become alienated from a sustaining cultural identity, even from the family itself. In some cases, the loss of identity and family may not be offset by

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economic gains.

Many migrants resent what one might call the cultural homogeneity of the schools, their subtle and not-so-subtle pressures on students to assimilate themselves into the mainstream, to conform. Here are the words of Juan and Ricardo, two brothers from a Chicano family that picked in the western stream.

Juan: "The schools have given in to the system, to what the white educational system is supposed to be like. If we want to make it, we have to do it their [Anglo middle-class] way, you know?"

Ricardo cut in, "But we Chicanos will never make it that way. We can't." Ricardo explained, "There is nothing in the schools we attended that pertained to us. Language was always a problem, sure, but it was more than that. There was no cultural understanding. They couldn't reach us because they didn't know us.

"They [the teachers] would pat us on the head and say, 'you are cute' but that isn't what we wanted, we wanted understanding. We wanted a sense of pride, but there was nothing we could fall back on to say we were proud of.

"The schools didn't have a damn thing set up for us as Chicanos or as migrants. . . you were always being called 'dumb.' The Anglo kids would call you 'dumb Mexicans.'"

(from *Sweatshops in the Sun*)

You must work in ways that respect each individual migrant child in terms of his or her cultural identity so that the educational progress they make is not necessarily at the cost of their own values. This is easier to say than to do. Too often, schools are hostile environments for the very students who come to them from hostile environments. Jules Henry did pioneering studies of the education of Black children that continue to have relevance for Migrant Education:

Our findings, miniscule though they are at present, suggest the obvious: that the outcome of a child's experience with the formal educational system is the sum of several types of experience—home, school and peer group. Any one factor taken alone cannot explain why some fail and others succeed. Plans for improving the education of children must be based, therefore, on an understanding of the relationship among the factors. While we cannot know what is going on in the life of every child, we have to assume that among deprived children they always suffer a heavy burden of extra-curricular environmental disability. Provision ought to be made for it in the school culture. Most obvious is the training of teachers to handle these children. Too often, among Negro as well as among white teachers, the attitude toward the child is such as to make his life in school almost as harsh as his environment at home. The result is an accumulation of anxieties beyond the point where school learning is possible.

Your responsibility, then, is to make certain that your classroom is not an alien environment. This will require more than an upbeat ambience and up-to-the-minute pedagogy. It requires a genuine respect for the varieties of human experience We are not a monolithic culture with a single set of values to transmit to the next generation but a pluralistic society with competing values side by side. You are entitled to take pride in your own cultural values, whatever they are, but you must be cautious about applying them in authoritarian ways in your teaching.

Education and the Migrant Child

Migrant children, all of them, deserve good teaching. If they begin with problems because of their excessive mobility and chronic poverty, then they and Migrant Educators must work harder. Here, from Herbert Kohl, is a description of what education in a society such as ours is about:

Public education has always been a part of our nation's commitment to democracy. The common school of Horace Mann, the school for all the children of all the people, is still worth fighting for if we hope to see our children or grandchildren live in a just, compassionate, and democratic society. There never was a time when public education worked for all the children, but fortunately, there also never was a time in our history when some people weren't struggling to make it work. It is that task that we must continue. It is possible now to build a program for public education, one that combines the best practices of the past with programs that relate to the specific social and technological conditions of our current life. In doing it we must keep in mind that the goal of public education is to provide young people with the basic skills needed to become effective and decent citizens in a democratic society.

In their study to establish national goals for Migrant Education, Wey and Cheyney wrote; "The responsibility for this situation lies with all of us." Migrant Educators bear a special responsibility. President Regan assured the nation that a safety net is in place to keep the poor from falling into the deepest abyss of poverty. Migrant Educators **are** that safety net. If we fail these children, their prospects are too bleak to contemplate. It is no empty rhetorical flourish to say that unless American education can deliver the goods for the children of migrant workers, the nation is just as much at risk as it is if our high-tech hardware falls behind that of the Japanese. If a high-tech elite is essential to the American brain, then good education for the children of migrant workers is essential to the American soul. These children test our commitment to our finest ideals.

The migrant is at the mercy of every ill man can endure and a few most men could never possibly imagine. The lot of migrant children everywhere is to live in ugly, barren, crowded surroundings, to work or wait in incredible heat from early morning until late evening, to lack parental companionship and supervision, to be fed poorly and irregularly, and, in general, to shift for themselves or be burdened with the care of babies or children smaller than themselves. Unless this vicious cycle is broken, the children are doomed to live the hopeless and uncertain lives of their ancestors, and they too will drop out of school—though, intelligence tests prove, not from lack of potential. Limited and inferior schooling combine with extreme deprivation to plague the children of migrant families.

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